

Final minutes

Meeting of the Civil Dialogue Group Rural Development

20 November 2020

Chair: Mr Dominique Fayel (Euromontana)

Organisations present: All Organisations were present, except APURE, ECPA, EFNCP, EuropaBio, FoodDrinkEurope, FurEurope, PAN Europe, PREPARE.

1. Approval of the agenda

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was non-public.

3. List of points discussed

Ms. Silvia Micheleni, Director Rural Development, DG AGRI introduced the meeting. She introduced herself and emphasised the important timing of this CDG meeting, coinciding with the start of the trilogues, just ahead of the beginning of the transition period and while the Long Term Vision for Rural Areas (LTVRA) is under construction. She underlined the need to involve all stakeholders for these different issues.

1. Elections

The 3 candidates presented themselves.

Mr Dominique Fayel, is a French meat-farmer, living in a mountainous and rural area in France. He lives in a very remote and sparsely populated area in Massif Central, thus is very interested by subjects linked to rural development. He represents Euromontana for a 1st mandate as Chair having held position of Vice-Chair for the last two years.

Mr Hartmut Berndt representing ELARD for a 1st mandate as Vice-chair was introduced by his colleague Kirsten Birke as he could not attend the meeting himself. He has a background in agricultural engineering and is very supportive of the LEADER method. He works for sustainable development in Gottingen in Germany, is a LAG manager and is also the Vice-President of ELARD.

Ms Cristina Tinelli represents COPA for a 1st mandate as Vice-Chair. She is responsible for Confagricultura in Brussels and has been actively involved in rural development at national and EU levels for the past 20 years. She also provides technical assistance for many Italian regions on rural development issues, thus she has strong expertise on both rural development and state aid measures.

The elections were conducted with the following results:

Mr Dominique Fayel was elected (33 in favour / 2 against / 4 abstention).

Mr Hartmut Berndt was elected (28 in favour / 3 against /9 abstention).

Ms Cristina Tinelli was elected (36 in favour / 1 against /4 abstention).

Mr Fayel thanked the audience for their trust and congratulated Mr Peter Pascher, former Chair for the past two years, for his past mandate and knowledge about rural development. Mr Peter Pascher congratulated the new chair and expressed his wishes for the organisation of good teamwork with the vice-chairs and the European Commission.

2. CAP post 2020 - implications of the EP and EC positions on the Rural Development: state of play of trilogues

Gregorio Dávila Diaz, Deputy Head of Unit F1 (Conception and consistency of rural development) – DG AGRI gave a presentation on the CAP reform that is available on CIRCABC.

He explained the positions of the Council and the European Parliament while commenting on the position of the European Commission.

Mr Davila Diaz specifically explained the positions of the Council on the following issues:

- Environment issues (such as the introduction of ring-fencing for eco-schemes or the inclusion of ANC payments within the 30% of EAFRD ring-fencing, tendency to maintain the status quo for conditionality of payments);
- the new delivery model (such as suggestions to reduce the performance review to two per programme period instead of annual reviews proposed by the EC);
- Rural development (such as the introduction of the possibility to revise the ANC delimitation, the possibility of land purchase, integration of some large-scale

investments outside LEADER, voluntary rather than compulsory risk management and adding further details regarding cooperation for LEADER).

- Financial management (such as the co-funding rates or changes related to ring-fencing for young farmers)
- Governance (regional elements, reducing the approval of CSP from 8 to 6 months).

The speaker also explained the position of the European Parliament on environmental issues (such as the introduction of a number of ring-fencing requirements), extension of the negative list of investments and the possible adoption of regional intervention programmes, increasing the number of measures from 8 to 10; introducing a social conditionality and a new economic scheme for boosting competitiveness in first pillar and making a Smart Village Strategy compulsory. Small changes in how stakeholders should be included – requirement, that the LAGs should be included in the stakeholders' involvement.

In terms of timeline, the trilogues have begun and should be finalised by April / May 2021 prior to the adoption of regulations by the summer followed by the delegated acts. The submission of CSP should be made by late 2021.

During the debate, questions were asked by CEETTAR, ELARD, COPA, ECVC, IFOAM.

The representative of the Commission explained:

- Regarding the list of possible ecoschemes: they will most likely be defined in a delegated act, to be adopted after the summer once the general regulations have been adopted.
- There is no information so far on how the new Smart Villages strategy, which might now become compulsory, will be implemented.
- The Commission has proposed to have a single CSP per MS. For Spain, France, Italy and Germany, the regions have already been included in the discussion for the SWOT analysis and they should be part of the definition of the intervention strategy. However, interventions could be implemented at either national and /or regional levels, it is up to each MS to decide.
- The Commission considers that ANC support is primarily an income-support tool. Even whilst acknowledging the positive impacts of this scheme on climate change, farmers are not asked to deliver additional actions in order to benefit from this support. Thus, to strengthen its green ambitions, the Commission wishes to exclude ANC payments from the calculation of contributions to green objectives.
- The Commission will soon issue some recommendations for MS to make more explicit the link between the CSP and the Green Deal.

Due to lack of time, the following questions were not asked. The Commission is asked to provide some written responses:

- WWF: How will the Commission ensure the CAP Strategic Plans contribute to its flagship Green Deal, F2F and the Biodiversity Strategy, given that the co-

legislators have rejected any possibility to create connections with these strategies?

- The Staff Working Document analysing the links between the CAP reform and the Green Deal was published alongside with the F2F and Biodiversity Strategies. There were several conclusions and suggestions to strengthen the links and ensure that the CAP reform delivers on the DG targets and objectives. In this respect and following this analysis, recommendations will shortly be sent to Member States in order to ensure that CAP Strategic Plans include the necessary ambition. The Commission is closely following the co-decision process, in order to prevent any watering—down compared to the Commission proposal and the Green Deal objectives.
- RED: What about the request to reintegrate EAFRD in the common strategic framework with the other structural funds?
- The discussions between co-legislators as regards the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) are almost finalised. Consistency, synergy and coordination between Union funds must be ensured, even if EAFRD will not be part of the scope of the CPR.

3. Transition regulation - detailed implications for Rural Development, the use of ERI funds in 2021, 2022

Gaelle Marion Head of Unit of Rural Development and Beata Adamczyk, Policy Officer Unit F1 (Conception and consistency of rural development) – DG AGRI gave a presentation that is available on CIRCABC.

They explained that in June 2020 the agreement was made between the co-legislators on the essential elements of the transition period. In November 2020, a political agreement was reached on making the additional resources for rural development from the European Union Recovery Instrument (EURI) (approx. €8 billion) available in 2021 and 2022. The adoption of the transitional regulation is dependent on the adoption of the 2021-2027. The EURI-related provisions are dependent on the adoption of the EURI regulation. The CDG was also informed about a request made by some MS to extend the Covid-19 measure. This request might have to be addressed in the last political trilogue due to take place on 27 November 2020.

The principle of the transition is that the current programming will be extended by 2 years (2021 and 2022). The implementation period of the RDP will run until 31 December 2025. MS will have to submit requests to amend their RDP. The amendments of the RDP will have to ensure that the overall share of EAFRD programmed for environment and climate measures must be maintained. The N+3 rule will apply to the 2021 and 2022 allocations, which can be used until 31 December 2025. It is foreseen that the transitional regulation will be adopted mid December 2020.

During the debate, questions were asked by COPA, COGECA, RED.

The representatives of the Commission explained:

- It will be possible for MS to make new environmental commitments in the transition period, but these will be shorter (1-3 years as a general rule)

- It will be possible to carry-over expenditure related to multi-annual commitments into CAP Strategic Plans. The modalities will be determined in the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation.
- Until 2025, MS can implement their RDP under the current rules, as modified by the transitional regulation (e.g. with regards to non-regression or shorter multi-annual environmental commitments).
- Financial envelopes will be distributed among MS who will allocate them to RDPs.
- The EURI-related provisions in the transitional regulation will apply retroactively from 1st January 2021.

4. Long term vision for rural areas - state of play –

Ms. Silvia Michelini, Director Rural Development DG AGRI & Mr. Mario Milouchev, Director Rural Development DG AGRI shared a presentation that is available on CIRCABC.

Ms Silvia Michelini explained the rural areas´ challenges and opportunities at the root of the initiative for a LTVRA. The preparation is based on three main blocks: through public consultation (opened up to 30th November 2020) and engagement of citizens, NGOs, analysis (based on facts, figures and inputs of H2020 projects) and foresight analysis (through the work of the JRC and of ENRD thematic group on LTVRA).

Mr Mario Milouchev shared the feedback already received from the roadmap. 198 respondents provided responses to this roadmap and shared issues to focus on in the LTVRA, such as challenges to address, but also opportunities through which to unlock the potential of rural areas. The responses also focused on the time plan and need for concrete actions.

During the debate, questions or comments were delivered by RED, CEPF, COPA, EURAF, EUROGITÉS, EUROMONTANA, CEETTAR.

The representatives of the Commission explained:

- On statistical representation: there are different figures depending on the typology used (rural-urban typology or urbanisation degree per km² (more info on [EUROSTAT](#)), but the Commission is paying close attention to it to have the best possible picture.
- On the need to take into account the diversity of rural areas: the last report published by OECD takes into account the proximity of rural areas to urban areas and analyses the positive agglomeration effect but also the distance-penalty effect on the most remote rural areas. This is an important point that should be taken into account in the LTVRA as the challenges and opportunities are not homogenous in all rural areas.
- On the outcome of the rural vision (action plan, targets, milestones...): this is not pre-defined yet. The Commission will take into account the results of the consultations, and results of the foresights, the thematic working group of the ENRD, and some analytical work as well. Stakeholders contributions to this process are very welcome. There will not be any legally binding act immediately following the Communication but some preparatory work and actions will be launched.

- On the link with Green Deal: this vision should be consistent with the different long term objectives of the EU on issues which are key for rural areas, such as environment and climate (so indeed the Green Deal), but also on other aspects such as demographic aspects, socio-economic factors etc.
- On land use practices: there will be many aspects of life in rural areas, including land use, which will be taken into account, in the LTVRA, but the vision will not be limited to agricultural issues. The initiative will be developed jointly with DG REGIO, under the coordination of Vice President Suica, and will include demographic and socio-economic aspects.
- Position papers can be sent to EC-VISION-RURAL-AREAS@ec.europa.eu

The following questions were asked to all participants

- *What has been in your view the impact of the Cork 2.0 Declaration?*

On the follow-up of the LTVRA: the representative of the Commission explained that the Cork declaration was welcome positively by stakeholders but one of the missing points with the Cork declaration was the absence of follow-up planning. For the LTVRA the Commission will try to do a real follow-up for monitoring purposes.

- *What will be the final output of the vision for rural areas? How can we ensure that it has relevant positive impact on the ground?*

Representatives from ELARD and RED underlined the need to deliver the LTVRA for the citizens, to ensure understanding and respect for rural areas and their inhabitants, but also to transform the vision into programmes that implement the vision (not only with EAFRD but also with other EU funds). It is essential that the vision is delivered with the involvement and cooperation of stakeholders to avoid perceptions of it being imposed. Representative from COPA insisted on the need to develop educational opportunities such as infrastructure development and clear labelling of food products. For RED, innovative territorial initiatives must be encouraged by taking long-term perspectives.

- *What could be the most effective way to involve all relevant stakeholders in preparation of the vision for rural areas?*

On the wording of the consultation (developed more for citizen responses than NGOs): the representative of the Commission explained that the consultation allows citizens and NGOs to share their positions, allowing for the collection of wide feedback. Of course the weighted importance of organisations that represent high numbers of citizens will be taken into account but it is important to develop this LTVRA with a wide consultation.

5. Future of rural networks and links between CDG and RNs

Ms. Helen Williams, Deputy Head of Unit E2 responsible for the European Network for Rural Development in DG AGRI & Ms. Antonella Zona, Policy Officer Unit B2 Research and Innovation DG AGRI made a presentation that is available on CIRCABC.

To ensure a flexible transition with the future CAP networks, the continuity of the rural networks is provided for thanks to different provisions in the transition period to avoid any interruptions, whether at EU or national level. At EU level, a call for tenders was launched in October to ensure continuation of networking support during the transition period but also throughout the next programming period, as there will be an annual contract which can be renewed annually for a further 8 years.

They also welcome any inputs on the governance of the future CAP networks. Some reflections have already taken place in different groups (Assembly, Steering Group, CDG on RD etc), but further inputs will be welcome. So far, some suggestions could be to make the Assembly more political and to maintain the current LEADER and innovation permanent subgroups which could continue to be relevant for the future.

During the debate, questions or comments were delivered by EUROMONTANA, COGECA.

The representatives of the Commission explained:

- On the formal links between CDG on RD and the Steering Group: so far the chair and vice-chairs are observers of the Steering Group. In the future, it will have to be decided if this is maintained.
- On the timing: the governance will be discussed in the coming year, including also in this CDG.
- On the efficiency of the networks: remarks were made by stakeholders on maintaining a reasonable number of meeting versus allowing networking (too many meetings can reduce networking efficiency).
- On EIP-AGRI: the Commission would welcome further exchange of views on how to better integrate innovation and the operational groups in the future CAP network.

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

Some important dates to bear in mind:

By December 2020, the transition regulation should be adopted

In March 2021, a large conference on the LTVRA will be organised with ENRD.

By April /May 2021, the trilogues should be finalised to allow the adoption of the CAP regulation.

By June 2021, the European Commission should publish its Communication on the LTVRA.

5. Next steps

Discussions will continue on the LTVRA including the future CAP network. Inputs from members of the CDG on RD are welcome on innovation and on how to tackle the subject in the future CAP network.

6. Next meeting

Next meetings are planned for 11th February 2021 and 26th November 2021.

7. List of participants - Annex

Disclaimer

"The opinions expressed in this report represent the point of view of the meeting participants from agriculturally related NGOs at community level. These opinions cannot, under any circumstances, be attributed to the European Commission. Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on behalf of the Commission is responsible for the use which might be made of the here above information."

List of participants

Meeting of the Civil Dialogue Group Rural Development

20 November 2020

MEMBER ORGANISATION	NUMBER OF PERSONS
Association des régions européennes des produits d'origine (AREPO)	1
Association for the European Rural Universities (APURE)	---
Confédération Européenne des Entrepreneurs de Travaux Techniques Agricoles, Ruraux et Forestiers (CEETTAR)	1
Confédération Européenne des Propriétaires Forestiers (CEPF)	1
Euromontana	2
EuropaBio	---
European agri-cooperatives (COGECA)	9
European Agroforestry Federation (EURAF)	2
European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)	1
European Council of Young farmers (CEJA)	2
European Crop Protection Association (ECPA)	---
European Environmental Bureau (EEB)	2
European farmers (COPA)	9
European Federation of Rural Tourism (Eurogites)	1
European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP)	---
European Fur Breeders' Association (Fur Europe)	---
European Landowners' Organization asbl (ELO asbl)	3
European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD)	1
European Liaison Committee for Agriculture and agri-food trade	2

(CELCAA)	
European Milk Board (EMB)	1
European Rural Community Alliance (ERCA)	1
FoodDrinkEurope (FoodDrinkEurope)	---
International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements EU Regional Group (IFOAM EU Group)	2
Pesticide Action Network Europe (PAN Europe)	---
PREPARE Partnership for Rural Europe (PREPARE)	---
Ruralité-Environnement-Développement (RED)	1
SMEUnited	1
Stichting BirdLife Europe (BirdLife Europe)	2
WWF European Policy Programme (WWF EPO)	1